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THE NEO-HEBRAIC LANGUAGE AND ITS LITERATURE¹.

EVERY one acquainted with the Bible² knows that the book of Ezra begins with the concluding verses of the second book of Chronicles. This second book is the last in the Hebrew canon, so that on reaching its final verses we are led to believe we have arrived at the end of the canon. Instead of that these verses form the beginning of another book of high importance—a book which in a certain sense contains the revival of Judaism.

I will not enter here into the question as to what cause this remarkable circumstance is to be attributed. I call attention to it merely because I find in it a striking instance of the strange events met with in the history of the Hebrew language. To those who are perhaps of opinion that with the conclusion of the Bible Hebrew literature comes to an end, or at least loses its importance, we shall now endeavour to make clear that afterwards it was revived, and entered on a period of new life, during which it can compete with any literature in the world for growth and extent.

Indeed a revival was then very necessary. Signs of a decline in Hebrew are discernible already in the Bible. Even in the later prophets the old ardour is no longer felt. In Malachi for example the exalted flight, the irresistible power, the striking figures, the ardent lan-

¹ Opening address delivered to the Amsterdam University, Jan. 21, 1901.

² When here and later on I speak of the Bible, I refer exclusively to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Canon.

guage, which so completely takes hold of the mind, heart, and soul of the reader, hardly exist. One is no longer struck by the expression of burning indignation at the wickedness committed, at the dominant evils, or by the vivid representation of the shame and the punishment which must unavoidably follow, so that "both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle¹." In fact the Talmud² points to the difference of style between Isaiah and Ezekiel.

The influence of foreign peoples on Hebrew is little noticeable before the first fall of Jerusalem, except that through frequent intercourse with the kingdoms of Aram, Aramaic had worked its way into Palestine—at least into the court circles—as can be seen from the second book of Kings³ and from Isaiah⁴. But so long as Palestine was in possession of the Hebrews, the native tongue was able to hold its own. It was a different matter when by far the greatest and most important part of the Israelites was banished from the land by Nebuchadnezzar, and driven to a country where also a dialect of Aramaic was spoken. This must have exercised a great influence on Hebrew, already so closely related to Chaldee. Add to this that for a long time Israel did not get back her independence, for although a considerable number returned to their country, they remained continuously subjected to other nations: first to the Persians, then to the principal dynasties which were the outcome of the Greco-Macedonian dominion, and later on to the Romans. Only once again, viz. under the Hasmonaeans, did they fight themselves free, and were they able to maintain their independence for one short century, but after that it was lost for good and all.

Under such circumstances it is easy to understand that there can be no question of a pure, unadulterated Hebrew. Not only do the Aramaic elements make themselves felt,

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 11.

³ Ch. xviii.

² Babyl. *Chagiga*, 13 b.

⁴ Ch. xxxvi.

but the language is also sprinkled with Persian and Greek. The book of Esther affords the best proof of Persian influence; and yet this and other writings are literary products of Hebrew growth, and were considered by the compilers of the canon to be worthy of being included therein.

It is still always an open question as to when the canon was brought to a close. In the Talmud¹ there are signs of great caution having been observed on this point. It seems indeed that more than one work did not obtain for itself the favour of being accepted; for it is not advisable to take it for granted that all the writings cited here and there in the Bible had entirely disappeared at the time of the closing of the canon. Even the work of Josua ben Sirach was probably finished before that time. In the Babylonian Talmud it is highly thought of, for not only are quotations from it given from time to time, but once² it was even reckoned amongst the Hagiographa. Against its adoption into the canon perhaps the same considerations presented themselves as led one of the Amoraïm in the Talmud³ to advise people not to read this book. In the Palestinian Talmud⁴, moreover, there is mention of a Hebrew work by a certain Ben Laänah, and in the Midrash Rabba⁵ of one by a certain Ben Tiglath—both works by the way quite unknown. Whatever may be said as to the origin of those works, nothing originally written in Hebrew before the middle of the third century has come down to us. Towards the close, however, of the same century a vigorous revival of Hebrew literature took place, and until this present time the writing of Hebrew has maintained itself, if a comparatively short period during the fifth and sixth centuries may be left out of account.

Just in the same way as a new work of great im-

¹ Babyl. *Sabbath*, 31 b. *Menachoth*, 45 a.

² *Baba Kama*, 92 b.

³ Babyl. *Sanhedrin*, 100 b.

⁴ *Sanhedrin*, x. 1.

⁵ *Kohleth*, xii. 12.

portance, the contents of which form a revival in the history of Judaism, starts at a point which one would take to be the conclusion of the Bible, so Hebrew suddenly arises, like a phoenix from the ashes under which it was thought to be buried long since, and it is this post-biblical language that people rightly or wrongly call "neo-Hebraic or new Hebrew." (Later on it will appear why I question the correctness of this term.) I will now endeavour to explain briefly: (I) The extent of the "new Hebrew" literature and what works can be looked upon as belonging to it; (II) in what respects this language differs chiefly from biblical Hebrew; and (III) why the study of the neo-Hebraic language may be considered of great importance.

I.

In the first half of the third century R. Jehuda Hanasi compiled the Mishna, by collecting various, and to his idea authoritative opinions on the application of the precepts of the Jewish Law. Although the Pentateuch forms the foundation on which this work is based, statutes of a later date were also included, especially those which serve to prevent the infringement of a biblical commandment. The opinions of various learned men on certain smaller sections of the law had already been brought together before the time of Jehuda Hanasi. Not infrequently in the Mishna he allows these scholars to appear themselves on the scene and to bring forward and defend their opinions in their own words. It can be held with certainty that there are indications that for several centuries previously proofs of collections existed. Of these I will cite just one instance, which will at the same time give some small idea of Jehuda Hanasi's style of working.

The beginning of Treatise Kidushin, c. 4, reads as follows:—"The exiles returning from Babylon to Palestine are divided into ten classes, in order to maintain strictly the solidarity of family life, viz. into priests, Levites, &c."

The whole sentence is in ordinary Hebrew, but the names of the classes have their plural terminations in Chaldee. It is strange—indeed I might say, almost unaccountable—that these Chaldee words should suddenly occur in the middle of a treatise in ordinary Hebrew, the more so as they appear often enough in the Mishna with Hebrew endings. Unaccountable it would have been indeed, if there were no passage in the Talmud¹ to give us some enlightenment. For is it not stated there that Hillel the Babylonian, the same who on his coming over to Palestine was consulted in doubtful cases² by the greatest scholars of his time, is the author of this sentence in the Mishna? It would seem he was so accustomed to the language of the country in which he lived that he could not restrain himself from giving Chaldee endings to Hebrew words, most of which he heard on everybody's lips. It should be noticed also that the text of Hillel, as appears from the above-cited Talmud passage, contained a second phrase in addition to the one already given, but this the compiler of the Mishna ignores, being unable to agree with it, whilst the one he does agree with he reproduces in the same words in which he found it.

Thus we have in the Mishna of Jehuda Hanasi a sentence in Hebrew, which dates from about 30 years B.C., and which no doubt is one of the oldest citations occurring there. It is true, Frankel³ surmises that the Mishna contains paragraphs taken over literally from the *Ecclesia Magna*, but they are not the so-called Halachoth, that is, articles on legislative subjects, but exegetical explications of the Bible, from which the existing regulations take their origin.

Jehuda Hanasi moreover makes mention of a collection of laws by R. Akiba עקיבא ר' משנת דר' ⁴, which is cited in

¹ Babyl. *Jebamoth*, 37 a.

² Vide Talm., Babyl. *Pesachim*, 66 a.

³ *Hodegetica in Mischnam*, p. 5 and following.

⁴ *Sanhedrin*, ch. 3, § 4.

Tosefta¹. He even speaks of a collection which preceded that by Akiba (משנה ראשונה). A statement in the Talmud² seems to point to a considerable collection by R. Meïr, one of the foremost disciples of Akiba. The task, however, of paraphrasing, collecting, and arranging the whole domain of Jewish legislation, and in all its detail, was reserved to Meïr's disciple Jehuda Hanasi. In any case no earlier collection of that kind or of that extent has come down to us.

The language of the Mishna is Hebrew; not indeed the Hebrew of the Bible—that could not be, for it contains neither history nor poetry. We do not find in the Mishna the affectionate tone, the fatherly exhortations to good and virtuous deeds, the pastoral warnings against evil, that are so often met with in the Pentateuch. On the contrary; except for the treatise of the so-called “Sayings of the Fathers,” it is generally but a summing up of what is to be recommended and what must be avoided, from a religious and moral point of view.

For example, the commandment in Leviticus³, “Ye shall not swear by my name falsely,” we find of course repeated in the Mishna, but without the impressive clause added in the Pentateuch, “so that thou profane the name of thy God, I am the Lord.” On the other hand the Mishna does not content itself with a mere citation of the commandment, but it goes on to explain in full detail when and under what circumstances a man must be considered to have broken it, and when an oath may be allowed, so that we find a whole treatise with eight chapters and sixty-two paragraphs devoted to the subject of this one verse in the Bible.

Yet in spite of the dryness of the Mishnaic matter, sufficient care was taken to provide variation. At one time we are treated to a beautiful moral lesson, at another the wearying enumeration of laws and facts is interrupted

¹ *Maaser Sheni*, ch. 2, §§ 1 and 12; see also *Tosefta Zabim*, ch. 1, § 5.

² *Babyl. Sanhedrin*, 86 a.

³ Ch. xix. 12.

by a lively discussion, or even the contending parties are introduced and made to speak for themselves.

Not long after the Mishna was compiled other works appeared, in about the same spirit and in the same language; works which lay open to us to a great extent the sources from which Jehuda Hanasi can have drawn his knowledge. I mean Tosefta, Siphra, Siphre, and Mechilta, which are attributed to different men of renown, for a great part to the more distinguished amongst the disciples of Jehuda Hanasi. These works are spoken of collectively under the name of Boraitha (lit. *outside*), i.e. outside the Mishna. In the Siphra, Siphre, and Mechilta the statutes of the Jewish law are brought directly into connexion with the prescriptions of the Bible, an unusual proceeding with Jehuda Hanasi. All four contain more frequently discourses and discussions held by earlier sages—passages therefore of older date. Thus we often hear them discuss the meaning of the biblical statutes. Not infrequently these discussions bear traces of having been taken over from some former collections or attempts at collection¹.

The dialogues of the Boraitha were held in Hebrew. This language therefore still lived among the learned. It was, however, used by them also in their addresses to the people, as can be seen, e.g. from a Boraitha passage cited in the Talmud². Even later Amoraïm (i.e. interpreters of the Mishna) of the fourth and fifth centuries, who in their disputes and discourses generally made use of a sort of Aramaic, this being the language best understood by the people of Babylon where they lived, often enough delivered their addresses also in Hebrew. In this connexion an interesting incident is recorded in the Talmud³ with regard to the phrase *מים שלנו*, because *לנו* may mean either "they belong to us" or "they have passed the night." The Tanaïm (the teachers in the Mishna or Boraitha) and the older Amoraïm of the third

¹ Compare p. 28, note 1.

² Babyl. *Bezah*, 15 b.

³ Babyl. *Pesachim*, 42 a.

century and beginning of the fourth, speak nearly *always* Hebrew, both amongst themselves and before their auditors. When notwithstanding this we sometimes hear a Methurgeman (interpreter) spoken of, it seems to me that his services were only required when passages were read from the Pentateuch or from the prophets; for certainly the old classical language could not pride itself on being known by all. The Talmud¹ shows that many no doubt able students of Jehuda Hanasi were not capable of explaining certain rarely occurring words. Their meaning they only derived from the ordinary language used by servants in their master's household. The same fate befel other words uncommon in the language of the Tanaïm. The Talmud mentions² that Rabbi Huna, one of the older Amoraïm, felt offended at being called colleague by Rabbi Anan, who in knowledge was far behind him. To make his grievance known to the offender he sent one of his pupils with a note that savoured of displeasure, and which contained a word that is to be found only twice in the Bible. R. Anan in despair applies to the Exilarch for elucidation as to the meaning of that word, but instead of receiving any assistance he is rebuked for his ignorance and told that "one who does not even know the meaning of the word אֲדָמָה ought to call R. Huna, not his colleague, but his *master*."

From this it is evident that it was considered a disgrace, at least for the *literati*, not to understand the most uncommon words of the Bible, and when domestic servants of the third century use such words in their daily talk about matters of housekeeping, surely Hebrew must have been for years the ordinary language of intercourse amongst the Jews, even during their term of political subjection. It is therefore difficult to agree with Dukes, Geiger, and others that it had survived only as the language of scholars, just like Latin in the Middle Ages. There is more foundation

¹ Babyl. *Rosh Hashana*, 21 b.

² Babyl. *Ketuboth*, 69 a.

for the opinion of Graetz, that even in those days the Hebrew of the Bible was still a living tongue. We shall then be better able to understand how not only the Mishna and Boraitha, but also the so-called Midrash for a considerable portion, came to be written in comparatively pure Hebrew.

Under the name of Midrash I now introduce to you a new branch of Hebrew literature, which makes its appearance some centuries later than the Mishna, and which does not deal with a summing up of the religious laws or with the task of interpreting the Pentateuch so that these laws can be derived from it, but with an allegorical and homiletical explanation of the whole Bible, intended, it would seem exclusively, for the sermons and discourses in which the people were instructed, by means of figures and illustrations taken from their own surroundings, or from life in general, as well as through narratives of sacred or profane events here and elsewhere, but always in connexion with, and under guidance of, the Bible. Although the homiletical explanation of the Bible is of much older date—both in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud innumerable traces of it are to be found—the first collection does not date from before the sixth century, but once begun, this branch of literature grew and developed to an enormous extent.

Almost all through, the Midrash is rich in thought and original, and not infrequently it charms and fascinates the reader. It contains no works of a strictly scientific character, and should be looked upon as if it were the poetry of the time (the *Agada*) which was founded on the Bible, just as the Halacha may be said to have been the plain and serious study of the Scriptures.

It is true that a great part of the Midrash literature is composed in a sort of Chaldee, but a very considerable portion of it is Hebrew. I am not aware of any statement being found along with the addresses it contains to the effect that the speaker was assisted by an *interpreter*, so

that this also would go to show that Hebrew was understood by the public.

In the seventh century a new kind of Jewish literature, viz. the so-called *liturgical poetry*, makes its entrance into the world with the work of a certain José ben José Hajathom. Laws of the Talmud, homilies and phantasies of the Midrash relating to festivals or days of observation in the Jewish Calendar, are for each of these days in particular collected into groups in which there is a certain rhythm, and in those of later date even rhyme. The Hebrew utterances found in the original sources are reproduced almost unaltered, but the non-Hebrew phrases are first put into a Hebrew garb. These productions are known under the name of Piutim, a word formed from the Greek ποιητής¹. In the course of the following centuries they are made use of to describe the sad fortunes of the Israelites in the various countries of their abode, and prayers for better times are added to them. Even at the present day in many Jewish communities, several of them are united with the more ancient prayers.

The writers of these productions bear the name Paitanim, formed from the word Piut. Amongst them we find some of the most renowned Jewish scholars. Even Maimonides, although not particularly enamoured of this kind of literature, which he considered too artificial and injurious to real and serious study, nevertheless tried his skill in it.

It is, however, not to be denied that many Paitanim sometimes allowed themselves too great a licence in the use of the Hebrew language. Thus they even attempted to make a plural of the Hebrew interrogative *מַדְּמָה* *why?* with the meaning *the questions why*. Abraham Ibn-Ezra² amongst others, in his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*³ twice draws our attention to excesses of this nature on the part of the otherwise famous Eliezer Hakalir, and although

¹ See "The Jewish Year," in the *J. Q. R.*, vol. XI, p. 64.

² 12th century.

³ Ch. v. 1; viii. 10.

Heidenheim¹ makes every effort to extenuate them, he is not able to defend them. Yet there are also Paitanim who keep to biblical Hebrew as strictly as possible, and these men have often furnished us with excellent and fascinating specimens of Hebrew. Simon ben Jitshak², Moses Ibn-Ezra³, Salomon Ibn-Gabirol⁴ were amongst those who distinguished themselves in this respect. Nor is this surprising, for their precursor, the afore-named José, had prepared the way by a work which shows great talent as well as great skill in the classical language. It is true most people hold that he lived in Palestine, the classical land of the Jews. We know for almost a certainty that this was the case with one of his most famous successors, Eliezer Hakalir, whom we have already named. Yet among the later Paitanim there were but few Palestinians. And for whom did they write? Surely not for those who did not understand them? Their productions were recited in the Synagogue, for which purpose in fact they were mostly intended; many it is true by the reader alone, but the majority by the entire community. There are even traces of an antiphonal chant⁵. In any case we are bound to suppose that their language was generally understood and had continued to live on amongst the people at large. Indeed to this very day Hebrew is still spoken in Palestine, Armenia, Arabia, and North Africa by the Israelite inhabitants. This being so, one is inclined to raise the question: "When was this language buried which we now generally count as amongst the dead?"

We possess a very large collection of Piutim. They are divided into certain rubrics according to their different contents, such as supplications, hymns, &c. Several are already published, many more still exist in MS., but greater

¹ *Prayer-book for the feast of New Year*, Röd., 1800, I, 86 b; and *Prayer-book for the Day of Atonement*, II, 9 b.

² 11th century.

³ 11th century.

⁴ Beginning of 12th century.

⁵ Vide Heidenh. *Prayer-book for the feast of Tabernacles*, Röd., 1800, I, 50 b.

by far is the number of those which we no longer possess and of which only a fragment or a single strophe is occasionally quoted. Writing according to a certain rhythm and with rhyme was so much in vogue during some centuries that even learned essays and doctrinal works were written in that style, as for instance the grammatical treatises of Aaron ben Asher¹, the preface to *En Hakoreh* by Jekuthiel Hacohen² and others. Even with authors who did not cultivate this mode of writing, it sometimes happened that a metrical line or strophe slipped from their pen in works of a totally different nature.

The grammatical works which I cited just now belong to another branch of literature, which makes its appearance in the seventh century. It seems that the Karaïtes, a Jewish sect which has now all but died out, greatly assisted in promoting it. Their works, however, have only come to us in fragmentary form; but with the beginning of the tenth century activity in the domain of grammar begins to take firm root amongst the Rabbinite Jews (all non-Karaïtes style themselves thus), and their writings very quickly develop into an entirely new literature. Let us name only Saädya Gaon³, Jona Ibn-Ganach⁴, Abraham Ibn-Ezra, who alone contributed some ten works on this subject, and David and Moses Kimchi⁵. These and many others have decidedly made their name in the domain of grammar or of lexicography, or of both, whilst to Ibn-Ezra and David Kimchi in particular belongs the glory of scarcely ever having departed from classical Hebrew. This branch of literature is still cultivated. A recent Hebrew grammar of the books of the Bible is no doubt that by the late scholar S. D. Luzzatto, edited by Abraham Kahana of Zitomir, of which the first part (Etymology) was sent me a few weeks ago. On the language of the Mishna a Hebrew grammar appeared in 1867. I myself, about ten years ago,

¹ 10th century.

² Before the 12th century.

³ 10th century.

⁴ 11th century.

⁵ 13th century.

was asked by some of my acquaintances to translate into Hebrew an essay on a certain point of Hebrew grammar which I had formerly written and published¹ in Latin under the title of *Darché Hanesigah*. I need hardly say that I acceded to this honourable request², and that in doing so I endeavoured, so far as the subject allowed it, to keep within the bounds of classical Hebrew³.

Saädya Gaon, whom I just mentioned, also opened the field to works on the philosophy of religion. Most of these, however, were originally written in Arabic and subsequently translated into Hebrew by scholars, who, although men of name, could not conceal from themselves the great difficulties and defects inherent in such a work. Besides the Arabic terminology, which is often retained, there are many constructions in their rendering which did not originate on Hebrew soil. A purer Hebrew is written by Levi ben Gerson⁴ and Abr. Ibn-Ezra in the philosophic discussions not infrequently met with in their commentaries on the Bible.

I have now approached one of those branches of literature which, though not represented in the Bible, yet deserve a prominent place in our discourse, viz. the Commentaries on earlier works. In a certain sense it may be said that already in the Mishna and Boraitha this class of literature had made a beginning. We have before called attention⁵ to explications of the Pentateuch found in the Mishna, and in another place⁶ we pointed out the contents of a certain part of the Boraitha. Nor are hermeneutic studies left uncultivated in the Midrash. The two Talmuds are extensive commentaries with discussions and arguments written on the Mishna, and often also on the Boraitha. Now all these

¹ *Sive leges de accentus Hebr. linguae ascensione*, Lugduni Batavorum, E. J. Brill, 1881 (Leyden, Holland).

² Published in Amsterdam by Levisson Bros.

³ It may be useful for the reader to know that Pr. Wijnkoop has also written a *Manual of Grammar and Syntax*, translated into English by Rev. C. van den Biesen, Luzac & Co., 46 Great Russell St., W. C.

⁴ 14th century. ⁵ Vide page 27 and *ibid.*, note 3. ⁶ Vide page 29.

works were themselves commentated upon by later authors, and these authors again are made the subject of commentary by succeeding generations. The first place of course is taken by the commentaries on the Bible, Mishna and Talmud, and these three are yet continued even at the present day. We cannot omit to make brief mention here of the renowned Solomon ben Jitshak¹, commonly called *Rashi*, who has bequeathed to us an explanation of nearly the whole Bible and of nearly the whole Babylonian Talmud, in a language and style so concise and powerful as to be perhaps without a parallel in any other literature. This is not the place to enlarge upon the very great merits of this fertile writer, but I must just mention that his Hebrew, so far as this was possible in dealing with subjects of the most diverse kinds, may be called almost pure. There even are amongst commentators on the Bible some who seriously applied themselves to imitating as closely as possible the biblical language. On this score the first place may well be assigned to Don Isaac Abrabanel², who also in his many other works so neatly and gracefully expresses himself. Next to him deserve to be mentioned Abr. Ibn-Ezra before referred to, Nachmanides³, David Kimchi, and in the previous century Isaac Reggio.

Needless to say, the art of poetry found many patrons and students amongst the kinsmen of the Psalmist, but it slumbered for many centuries until the Jews came into contact with the Arabs, while later on in Spain it enjoyed a hitherto unknown growth. We shall shortly have occasion to say something about the more famous of these poets.

Deserving of mention are also the works on textual and historical criticism, which subjects, especially since the beginning of the previous century, have occupied the thoughts of many. For a great part they have come to us in periodicals as *המאסף*, *בכורי העתים*, *כרם חמד* and others, but often also by means of the very instructive corre-

¹ 11th century.

² 15th century.

³ 13th century.

spondence between such men as S. Rapoport, Isaac Reggio, Leopold Dukes, S. D. Luzzatto, M. Sachs, &c.

When to all these works I add the almost innumerable casuistic works and codes (which by reason of the nature of the subject-matter only rarely observe the strict rules of grammar) along with the almost interminable string of homiletical writings, containing mostly elaborate Hebrew discourses, many of which really approach the purity of biblical Hebrew, I think I have enumerated the most *extensive* branches of Hebrew literature. I have purposely left out of account the two Talmudim, although containing a good few Hebrew pieces, because these are mostly from a Boraitha or contain a phrase of the older Amoraïm, while in the remainder not much that is Hebrew can be found. Nor shall I make mention of the Cabalistic works, seeing that these are hardly ever written in Hebrew.

Yet of the more *limited* kinds of Hebrew literature I should like to name just one, which assuredly is most remarkable from a linguistic point of view. I refer to the original, the most ancient prayers of the Israelites, thus excluding the subsequently added Piutim. These ancient prayers, in their beautiful language, join on immediately to the Bible, and should certainly be considered as the first neo-hebraic literary productions. The Boraitha¹ indeed ascribes them for the greater part to the *Ecclesia Magna*.

II.

Let us now see in how far new Hebrew really differs from the biblical language, apart from those points which we have already touched upon. Certainly Hebrew could not elude that general law, that every civilized language in the course of centuries undergoes great alterations. In addition to new subjects, different modes of reasoning, and foreign conceptions, brought about by greater communication and more extensive intercourse, it seems that a considerable part of these changes must be attributed to

¹ Talm. Babyl., *Megillah*, 17 b; cf. *Berachoth*, 33 a.

an ever-increasing tendency and desire on the part of those who use the language, to express their thoughts with greater precision and lucidity. With this end in view, they create for themselves new forms of speech, extend the stock of words, and seek new constructions. The force of the older words and forms of speech is hereby often enough weakened, their power more and more curtailed, and their boundaries continually more restricted.

We have already briefly pointed out that one or more factors must have exercised a detrimental influence on the lofty style of old Hebrew. Also in prose a comparison, for instance, between Joshua and the Chronicles would yield the same conclusion. Hebrew, moreover, less than any other language, could be safeguarded against changes, because of the vicissitudes the Hebrews experienced, and because they were so often transported to other countries, where willingly or unwillingly they took over much that was new to them. Already before the compilation of the Mishna, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Syrians, Egyptian Greeks, and Romans, had swayed the sceptre over them. Even quite apart from the languages of the peoples subjugated along with the Israelites, and with whom the latter also came into contact, those of the conquerors alone exercised a considerable influence in enlarging and remodelling the Hebrew tongue. Chaldee more than once shows itself in the Mishna language, by which term I understand the language of both the Mishna and Boraitha. It seems indeed to have been of old the official language for all legal matters, and the various nations subjugated to Babylon were quite possibly obliged to adopt Chaldee as being the only language officially recognized. People were so convinced of the necessity of this tongue for legal terms, that sometimes words, the origin of which was no longer known, or perhaps even in spite of its being known, were looked upon as Chaldee. Concerning the efficacy of a testamentary will, the Jewish law-giver teaches that its directions and assign-

ments have as much force before the deed has been placed in possession of the rightful persons as afterwards. With the object of explaining this principle from the meaning of the word *διαθήκη* and of showing how this word came by its signification of *last will, testament*, a Boraitha passage, quoted in the Talmud¹, holds *διαθήκη* to be a compound of the words *דקמל אהת אד* = *this be firmly settled*, words which occur in the actual deed. This in itself is neither better nor worse than when the *Etymologicum Magnum* derives the name *ἡλῆ* from *ζα* and *βουλή*, and certainly it is by no means so bad as deriving *testamentum* from *testatio mentis*, seeing that this was done by a thorough-bred Roman when dealing with a purely Latin word. The fact of people seeking to attribute these foreign words to Chaldee shows, however, the hold this language had upon them. And yet in the Mishna language Chaldee is restricted to legal terms, official acts and deeds, besides certain maxims of the aforementioned Hillel the Babylonian, a few short sayings and proverbs, and now and then a Chaldee stem which had made its way into Hebrew.

The influence, however, of Latin and Greek was far greater than that of any other language. In the course of ages the people became acquainted with ideas and objects, both from nature and from art, for which in biblical Hebrew no names existed. They were, in consequence, simply taken over from the then dominant language. Greek supplied such words as *ἀσθενής, διφθέρα, ἐπίτροπος, μηχανή, συνέδριον, ὑποθήκη*, and many more; Latin added *calamus, libellarius, patronus, subsellium, velum, vivarium*, and several others, not to mention the numerous names of plants, and the proper names of towns, countries, and persons.

The Jewish *literati* in the Mishna and Boraitha did not restrict themselves to the taking over of new words; they often so modified them as to give them a Hebrew appearance. *Πύρνος* (later) Greek, for instance, = *πύρνον, whcaten*

¹ Babyl. *Baba Mezia*, 19 a.

bread, food, was taken over, ending and all, and treated as a verbal stem of four letters with the general meaning *to care for, to provide*. "ἤμισιν is held in the Talmud¹ to be the stem of מִשְׁמִינִים, and by way of pleasantry even of the word הַמֶּסֶח in Deuteronomy², but probably it gave birth to the Hebrew stem מצע and its derivative אֶמְצַע *middle*. Κατήγορος throws off its ending, and lets itself be moulded into a verbal stem of four letters in קִטְרוֹ in which the ρ and γ have exchanged places in order to relieve the pronunciation. As the Hebrew שִׁלְחָן corresponds with the Greek τράπεζα, and from the latter τραπέζιτης was formed, so also was שִׁלְחָנִי formed from שִׁלְחָן, with a similar meaning. *Textus, what is woven*, in Hebrew מִסְפָּחָה, has to the latter also given the meaning, *text, subject of discourse*. *Studere* would appear to have gone over into Hebrew after the *r* was changed into ל; an alteration of common occurrence. Subsequently, however, it was looked upon as a form of the conjugation הִתְפַּעֵל made according to the well-known rules for the sibilants. In this manner the Hebrew stem שָׂרַל arose, in which a foreign origin can no longer be detected. It need hardly be said that the ethical principles of the Stoics well fitted in with the Jewish ideas of viewing life, and that the Hedonism of Epicurus was peculiarly repugnant to them. Hence אֶפְיָקוּרוֹס is the name for all who declare themselves independent of a higher power and of the principles which are founded on it. פָּקַד, moreover, became a verb with a similar meaning, and הִפְקִיד a noun denoting *absence of ownership*. The intimacy, indeed, with Greek and Latin became so great that *voces hybridae* were formed such as רִימְדִין from δύω and עִמְדִין. Finally it was but natural that the connexion with the Greeks, lasting as it did more than 500 years, should have resulted in the Israelites taking over from them, especially in the case of the Midrash literature, numerous sayings, proverbs, and images. The *construction* of the Hebrew verbs, however, was not influenced thereby in any noticeable degree.

¹ Palestin. *Maāsroth*, I, 2.

² Ch. i. 28.

Leaving the foreign elements aside and comparing the later Hebrew with that of the Bible, we come to regard it as a *vigorously continued development, and as an extensive remodelling of the materials which formed the substratum of the older language*. Though the small community of Jews which returned into Palestine was drawn into the vortex of international strife and struggle¹; though the spiritual seed, sown by Ezra and fostered by the *Ecclesia Magna*, was stunted in its growth; though foreign elements chiefly, as we have seen, Aramaic, obtained and exercised a certain hegemony—yet there remained factors enough for the preservation of Hebrew. Instead of expiring, the language acquired for itself a flexibility, a facility and a new vitality such as one would not have expected of the scriptural tongue. The Mishna language sounds like the expression of the natural conscience, and impresses us as a successful continuation of the language of the Bible. It has not the brilliancy of the poetry, the sublimity of the prophets, or the charm of rhythm such as we love and admire in the Scriptures. But in compensation for this it can pride itself on lucidity of expression and on a very extensive and yet definite terminology. It possesses, moreover, a far greater stock of words and constructions, which was by no means exclusively brought together from foreign material, but which truly represents the consistent development of the older tongue. Here and there unmistakable traces of a rejuvenating power are visible; e.g. in the epigrams occurring in the Talmud², but on the whole it is the language of simple easy prose. Out of consideration, therefore, for the Mishna literature alone one should hesitate before saying: “the language of the Bible is dead; later Hebrew is no longer the language of the Bible.” And a yet greater injustice is done by such statements as these to works of a later date than the Mishna and Boraitha,—works which are real products of art, and

¹ Compare Graetz' *Literaturblatt des Orients*, 1845.

² Babyl. *Moed Katon*, 25 b.

of which the language differs but little from that of the Bible. Attention should also be paid to the great variety of subjects which are dealt with in post-biblical literature. This difference of subject should not be overlooked when the works in later-Hebrew are tested in the balance.

The contents of the Bible may be divided into (1) history, (2) specimens of poetry, (3) legal constitution, viz. in the Pentateuch, and (4) prophecy. These different branches of literature we now venture to compare with corresponding works of later date.

(1) Real history is only found in the more recent productions of later Hebrew. Some of these, such as the accounts of travels, not infrequently distinguish themselves by purity of language. In the older works (Mishna and Boraitha) historic narratives are comparatively rare, but where they occur their language differs but little from that, e. g. of the Chronicles¹.

(2) The various categories of biblical poetry have in later literature been increased by those of the epic and elegy. Their productions may safely be called successful.

About a century ago Wessely wrote an epic on the Exodus from Egypt in five books. Although perhaps somewhat diffuse, a fault of which Wessely is more than once accused, yet in loftiness of thought and purity of style his poem leaves nothing to be desired, and I am certain that it contains no single word which would be an anomaly in the Bible. Not long after him a society was founded in this city (Amsterdam) under the name תועלת having for its object the promotion of pure classical Hebrew. In how far its members succeeded in this aim with their specimens of poetry can be seen from a perusal of their contributions collected into two parts called the בכורי תועלת and פרי תועלת. After this society, about half a century ago, ceased to exist, no serious and combined effort worth mentioning has been made in this city to forward the cultivation of classical

¹ See, for instance, the Boraitha passage quoted in Babyl. Talm., *Kiduschin*, 66 a.

Hebrew. We have, however, hitherto mentioned only examples of poetical literature which most closely approach our own age. When we go back to earlier centuries, to the works of Solomon Ibn-Gabirol¹, of Moses Ibn-Ezra², of Jehuda Halevi², of Jehuda Alcharizi³, and of others, we can again enjoy the ardour of Eastern poetry which we appreciate so much in the Bible, and the bold flight of thought which is possible only in a southern atmosphere.

(3) The Pentateuch presents us with a constitution. Post-biblical writings deal with subjects of jurisprudence in general. Their difference, therefore, in character, in force of language and style is not incapable of explanation. Thus the *Mishna* is a sort of *Corpus Iuris*. The *Mishne Thorah* of Maimonides is a *Code*. The author himself declares that he adhered to the language of the Mishna; but let us not forget that in this Code he has placed before us in Hebrew decisions contained in the Talmud in quite a different language, and that he has done this in a form and style so expressive and clear, so forcible and pure, that all imitation of it would appear impossible. With the exception of subjects for which in biblical Hebrew no words can be found, he may fairly be said to have maintained the standard of classical language.

(4) As for prophetic literature, this has entirely ceased to exist.

Summing up then we may say, that not all branches of biblical literature are represented in later Hebrew, but whenever they are represented, the deviations are not so great as to keep the two rigorously distinct. On the contrary the later Hebrew links itself on to the older. Circumstances of time and place have naturally brought about many alterations, but on the whole it is a further and forcible development of the older language.

I am aware that it is my duty to substantiate this opinion by furnishing some particulars, and in order to

¹ First half of 11th century.

² Second half of 11th century.

³ Second half of 12th century.

avoid going into the subject at too great length I shall limit my observations to the Mishna language. This I may safely do, seeing that the Mishna may serve as a model, and indeed has served as such for all subsequent Hebrew prose.

Needless to say, the *parts of speech* perform the same functions in the Mishna language as in that of the Bible. The great and important service which in the latter is assigned to certain *letter-particles* is also fully maintained. Nouns as well as verbs undergo the same alterations. It is true that the conjugation of the verb under the influence of Chaldee was somewhat enlarged. The Hithpaël has become the conjugation for the passive form, whilst the Niph'al in most cases is employed to express an action or condition arising out of the circumstances themselves. The use and meaning, however, of the *middle voice* the Niph'al has retained. Thus, for instance, נִבְשַׁל is still used for *to stumble*, נִשְׁבַּע *to swear*, נִשְׁעַן *to lean upon*. The *Shaphël*, moreover, which in the older Hebrew but rarely shows itself, has in the Mishna language acquired a permanent status.

No doubt several deviations as to syntax are to be found. The *status constructus*, which in the later books of the Bible is sometimes replaced by שֶׁל, is for the sake of lucidity restricted to such words as admit of alteration, e.g. תְּפִלַּת הַשַּׁחַר *morning prayer* from תְּפִלָּה; whilst the connexion of invariable words is effected by means of שֶׁל. The ל, as denoting the object of the verb, though sporadic in Bible Hebrew, is here quite common. The ה *interrogative*, too feeble to be of permanent and lasting use, had to make way for הֲ as interrogative particle, which in the Bible now and then occurs in the form הֲכִי¹. Only one instance of an interrogative ה have I been able to find in the Mishna². In like manner the omission of the conditional particle אִם, though rare in the Bible, has

¹ Gen. xxvii. 36, xxix. 15; 2 Sam. ix. 1; Job vi. 22.

² *Kilaim*, III, 7.

become the rule, and its use the exception. The construction of placing the direct or indirect object at the head of the sentence by means of a pronominal suffix occurs in the Bible occasionally¹, but here continually. The direct object, moreover, when qualified, is always preceded by $\text{וְ$. The conjunction כִּי denotes in Ezra and Chronicles a contrast, but in the other books of the Canon it is equivalent to וְאַמֵּן *indeed*. In later Hebrew כִּי always means *but*, and even וְאַמֵּן is used with the same meaning, but only in cases where the contrast is of a more grave and solemn character, such as may occur in connexion with old traditions. We have moreover modes of speech which in the Bible are found but rarely or not at all. As has already been stated, the dialogue especially in the Boraita is no strange phenomenon. Codification and casuistry also call for their own particular rules of syntax. Hence, e. g. it is that later Hebrew contains a much larger stock of particles.

All this, in my opinion, far from creating the impression that later Hebrew is but an effort—but even then a successful effort—to foster the little that remained of vitality in the old language and so long as possible to breathe new life into it, reveals on the contrary a steady advance on the old road though under altered circumstances.

There is, however, much more that leads to the same conclusion. Amongst the symptoms of expiring life, we should have expected to find innumerable reproductions of biblical phrases and modes of speech, for this gives a new language something of a classical air, although at the same time it betrays its inferiority, poverty, and inherent feebleness. But what do we find of this in the Mishna literature? Instances of it are exceedingly few. In Treatise Peah², five consecutive words have been borrowed from Isaiah³. In the *Sayings of the Fathers*⁴, half a verse is found taken from the Proverbs of Solomon⁵.

¹ e. g. Exod. xxxv. 5; Joshua i. 2.

³ vii. 25.

⁴ IV, 14.

² II, 2.

⁵ iii. 5.

On the other hand, traces of a *direct and independent development* similar to that of the older language abound. In the Bible, nouns derived from verbal stems by means of prefixed letters, sometimes themselves go over into verbs; e.g. תִּבְּנָה *fixed number* (stem בָּנָה *to be established*), as verb *to fix, arrange*¹; תִּצְּוֶה *desire* (stem צָוָה), as verb in the Hiphil *to show a desire, to desire*. The same word-formation is continued in the Mishna language; e.g. תְּרִיבָה *elevation, offering* (stem רָם), as verb תְּרַם *to elevate*²; מְבַטֵּחַ *taxation* (stem בָּטַח), *tax collector*; תְּבַלֵּל *miature* (stem בָּלַל), *to mix*.

In the Bible, biliteral and trilateral forms of the same stem are sometimes similar in meaning; e.g. חָיָה and חַיָּה *to live*; the same occurs in the Mishna language, e.g. קָנָה³ and קָנְיָה *to acquire*. In the Bible, as is well known, הִלְכָה and הִלְכוּ *to go* supplement one another; here in the same way הִפְּדָה and הִפְּדוּ *to change, turn round*⁴. After the example of תְּסַבֵּל *to support* (stem סָבַל) we have here תְּשַׁמֵּשׁ *to feel, to touch*, from שָׁשׂ, and תְּטַמְּטֵם *to conceal* from טָמַם (stem of אָטַם).

The number of *denominativa* in Hiphil, expressing a *condition, state*, as הִלְבִּיץ *to be white*, is here increased, e.g. הִכְסִיף *to be pale*, הִחְמִיץ *to be sour*. The means which the Bible possesses for the formation of *nomina* from verbal stems are here employed on the same extensive scale. The ending י־ for instance, though formerly rare, is here the usual means for describing persons characterized by a certain office; whilst the form *Katal*, used for this purpose in the Bible, here occurs in the same capacity with *nominal* stems; e.g. from תְּמוּרָה *ass*, תְּפִינָה *ship*, זְכִיכִית *glass*, גְּמַל *camel*, are derived תְּמַרֵּר *donkey-driver*, תְּסַפֵּן *skipper*, יִגְנֵן *glass-blower*, גְּמַלֵּל *camel-driver*; from the Greek βαλανεύειν, בְּלָן *bathkeeper*. Yet the older means, though numerous, are found insufficient. New ones, therefore, are invented, such as the ending י־אֵ

¹ In later writings and in the Mishna language תִּבְּנָה.

² See Maimonides' Tract, *Terumah*, I, 1.

³ Talm. Babyl., *Baba Mezia*, 48 b.

⁴ See Maimonides *ad Kilaim*, II, 3.

with the verbs נָחַי ל'ה e. g. הִשָּׂא *silence* from הָשָׂא *to be silent*, פָּנְא *space* from פָּנָה *to make room*. Dual forms, though rare in the Bible, are here numerous, e. g. מְפָחִים *two span*; קַבִּים *two kab* (a measure). הִלָּךְ, which in the Bible¹ is but rarely used in the sense of *to disappear*, is here met again in the same signification, e. g. הִלָּכָה הַמוֹרֶךְ² *thine ass is lost*. The peculiar custom in Hebrew of using certain conjugations, chiefly the Piël, for the purpose of denoting that the action expressed by a certain verb has been omitted, or that the object expressed by a noun has been removed, is not ignored in the Mishna language, on the contrary its use has greatly increased. In addition to the old stems, new ones are employed for the same purpose. יָבַל³ *to cut off the knot of a tree* is formed from יָבַלְתָּ *knot*; קָרַץ⁴ *to clear from thorns* from קָרַץ *thorns*; קָלַף *to peel* from קָלַף *skin*. The same, moreover, is done with the Hiphil, e. g. הִבְרִיק⁵ *to become blind* from בְּרַק *brightness*; הִגְעִיל⁶ *to cleanse* from גָּעַל (= גָּאַל old Hebrew) *to be defiled*; הִרְבִּישׁ⁷ *to lose its sweetness (taste)* from רִבֵּשׁ *honey*; הִתְלַעֵץ⁸ *to remove what is worm-eaten* from תּוֹלַעַץ *worm*. Instances occur in which even the Kal is used for this purpose, e. g. גָּלַד⁹ *deprived of its skin* from גָּלַד *skin*¹⁰. In imitation of פְּקָדוֹת¹¹ *officials*, names of persons who more or less belong to one class are formed by means of the past part. with the plur. in וֹת—, e. g. מְשַׁוְּחוֹת *surveyors*, תְּכַוְּרוֹת *tenants*; and even לְקַדְּחוֹת *purchasers* is met with. We find also fresh instances of *metathesis*, e. g. עָפְּיַן¹² *to shut the eyes* from עוֹפְּיָם¹³; new and even bold denominatives, as הִצְבִּיעַ¹⁴ *to raise the finger* from אָצְבַּע *finger*; אָחָה¹⁵ *to join closely* from אָחָה *brother*. For *reaping* and *the gathering in of fruits*, Hebrew

¹ e. g. Ps. xxxix. 14.² *Bechoroth*, IV, 4.³ *Shebiith*, II, 2.⁴ *Ibid.*, IX, 2; *Tosephta Sheb.*, I, 11.⁵ *Baba Mezia*, VI, 3.⁶ *Aboda Zara*, V, 12.⁷ *Baba Mezia*, Talm. Babyl. 38 a (cf. Rashi *ad vocem*), *Sanhedrin*, 101 a.⁸ *Middoth*, II, 5; cf. Maimonides *ad locum*.⁹ *Tosephta Chulin*, III, 7.¹⁰ *Job xvi*. 15.¹¹ *Ezek. vii*. 1.¹² *Sabbath*, XXIII, 5.¹³ *Isa. xxxiii*. 15.¹⁴ *Yoma*, II, 1.¹⁵ *Talm. Babyl.*, *Moed Katan*, 26 b.

possesses distinct verbs to denote the different classes of products, e. g. קָצַר *to reap*, בָּצַר *to gather grapes*, לָקַט *to collect herbs*. To these verbs later Hebrew has added many others, e. g. אָרְה, אָרְה, אָרְה *to collect olive-berries, figs, dates*. Indeed, it is particularly rich in words expressing ideas which in any way relate to agricultural affairs. The biblical word כָּח *power*, has in later Hebrew extended its meaning and acquired the sense of *influence, prestige*. Connected with a letter-preposition it means *in virtue of, by means of*. Further, in imitation of the old language, a ׀ is added with the result that עַל כִּרְח expresses the idea *against the will of, in spite of*. From the same stem, moreover, we have the Hiphil הִכְרִיחַ *to exercise influence, to force*. Several ἀπαξ λεγόμενα in the Bible occur here frequently along with their legitimate derivatives, e. g. אָמַן *to drink greedily* (in later Hebrew אָמַע), שָׁחַט *to press* (in later Hebrew שָׁחַט). The adv. כִּבְהָ so has the accent on the penultimate, with the result that ה has been added, as in לִיְהָ from לִיָּה. In the Bible, however, the original form is nowhere found, whilst in the Mishna language only כִּבְהָ occurs, and never its prolonged form. The prefix אֵי changes in the Bible the demonstratives זֶה and פֹּה *here* into interrogatives. In the Mishna language it is added to the interrogatives themselves for the purpose of strengthening their meaning; e. g. not only מַתִּי, but also אֵימַתִּי means *when*.

A cursory glance through the rules of Syntax will reveal many similarly remarkable features. For instance, in the Mishna¹ the verb expressing the main action is repeated in order to denote a resignation under adverse circumstances, just as we find in the book of Esther וְכִּבְאֶשֶׁר אֶבְרָתִי אֶבְרָתִי *if I am to perish, be it so*², or in Genesis xliii. 14. In the Bible we find already instances of a plur. idea expressed by a *status constructus*, composed of two plur. nouns, e. g. שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּלִּים instead of שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּל *army-officers*, בְּתֵי בְלָאִים instead of בְּתֵי

¹ e. g. *Sabbath*, XIV, 4.

² iv. 16.

כְּלָא *prisons*. According to the same principle we find in the Mishna language מִיָּי בְּשָׂמִים instead of בְּשָׂם מִיָּי *different sorts of spice*, דִּינֵי קָמוֹנוֹת instead of דִּינֵי קָמוֹן *money-matters*. The use of the 2nd pers. sing. to express the indefinite or impersonal *one*, although very rare in the Bible, is here quite common. On the strength of the phrase הָיָה רָעָה¹, the construction of הָיָה with a part. is very frequently used to denote a custom, whilst from the extensive sphere of the *actio non perfecta* those actions are withdrawn which *with certainty* will take place in the future, because they are better expressed by the עָתִיד followed by an infinitive with ל². The construction of the verbs has retained its former full value, with the exception of a few insignificant deviations. Hence, a certain teacher in the Talmud rightly points to the difference between הִנְיִעַ when construed with an accusative of object or when with the preposition ב³. The *lusus verborum*, so much in vogue in the Bible, is not wanting in later Hebrew, e. g. בְּצֹל וְיָשָׁב בְּצֹל⁴ *be content if necessary with a dish of onions, and live under your own roof*; and מִנְצַפֶּה צָפִים אֲמָרִים⁵ words of one who wished to indicate that the final letters date from the prophets. The coiner of this phrase used צָפִים⁶ instead of בְּיָאִים to make the sound consonant with מִנְצַפֶּה.

Finally, in later Hebrew, we meet again with the *attractio*, the *casus absolutus*, the *constructio ad synesin*, the *ellipsis*, the *hendiadys*, the pregnant phrases, in a word, with all the means of which biblical Hebrew availed itself, to set forth its thoughts with more force, grace, and expression. And thus, I think, I have sufficiently shown that later Hebrew, far from being a language having no connexion with the older tongue, ought on the contrary to be considered only as a direct continuation of it, indeed as *a language which is constructed upon the foundations of classical Hebrew*.

¹ Exod. iii. 1.

³ Talm. Babyl., *Gittin*, 32 a.

⁵ Talm. Babyl., *Sabbath*, 104 a.

² e. g. *Demai*, VII, 5; *Aboth*, III, 1.

⁴ Talm. Babyl., *Pesachim*, 114 a.

⁶ Cf. Ezek. iii. 17.

III.

After all that has been said I could dispense with the question why later Hebrew should be deemed of so great an importance. If my assertion is true, and later Hebrew is the continuation and further development of the older tongue, it is evident that the scholar who desires to study the latter should not remain ignorant of what was written after the Canon had been closed.

This, however, is not the only reason why the study of later Hebrew is to be commended. The very extent of this literature lays claim upon our appreciation; an extent such as finds its parallel only in Latin, and even Latin might perhaps on comparison have to cede the first place. For with Leibnitz Latin has practically ceased to be a cosmopolitan language, and before his time, during the Middle Ages it was principally used for doctrinal and scientific subjects. Hebrew, on the contrary, is cultivated also out of love for literary art, and during the last 200 years there certainly has been no decline in its fecundity. By means of weeklies, monthlies, and other kinds of periodicals this literature has spread itself in an unprecedented manner.

It is true that a great multiplicity of books does not in itself signify much. It is quite possible that they might contain but little worth knowing. This, however, is by no means the case with the works in later Hebrew. In the first place, it is certainly worth while acquiring the language in order to be able to make oneself even cursorily acquainted with the various views on ethics and philosophy held by the sages of Israel in the different periods of their activity. The Code of Maimonides, for instance, a work of great literary merit, in a large measure owes its inestimable value to its completeness, purity of diction, clearness of thought, and the incomparably artistic and systematic treatment of the huge bulk of material contained in the two Talmuds, in the Halachic writings, and

in the divers works of homiletical character. But it is not less true that the fame of this work is also greatly due to the moral doctrine which it teaches, the sound and wise counsels with which it abounds, and the deep insight into human nature of which adequate proofs are repeatedly seen.

You will not, I know, expect me to describe here the value and significance of every one of the more celebrated works written in later Hebrew. Even as regards the different *branches* of this literature I feel I must restrict myself to the few observations I have already advanced. I must not, however, fail to call attention to the great importance of Hebrew exegesis and lexicography for all those seeking a more profound knowledge of the biblical tongue. The works dealing with these subjects are recognized by all scholars as the purest sources and most reliable guides for the study of the sacred language. Gesenius says of them that they contain "die traditionelle Kenntniss der hebräischen Sprache, welche sich bei den Juden erhalten hat¹." Two works, moreover, although of a totally different nature, deserve brief mention. Through their instrumentality, as Benfey observes², narratives, anecdotes, fables of the ancient Indians have been brought over to Europe. They are supposed to have furnished the materials for the "Decamerone" of Boccaccio and the "Conde Lucanor" of Don Manuel. I refer to the Hebrew translations of the work "Kelila ve-Dimna" (the Arabic name of the *Pantschatantra*), and "Mishle Sandabar," both from the Arabic. The Hebrew rendering is the work of the otherwise unknown Joel ben Jehuda of the first half of the thirteenth century. A Latin translation³, made from the Hebrew version by John of Capua, has introduced both works to the western nations. Although the *Pantschatantra* has been rendered into several tongues, both Eastern

¹ Introd. to the Hebrew Lexicon.

² *Pantschatantra*, 1. Theil, Vorrede, S. xxiii, Leipzig, 1859.

³ Between 1263 and 1278.

and Western, the Hebrew version is praised by Benfey as the more original and correct¹. Of the works themselves Benfey says, "Beide Werke sind bekanntlich von der grössten kultur-historischen Deutung und stehen an der Spitze eines überaus umfassenden und einflussreichen occidentalischen Literaturkreises²."

The literature of later Hebrew, apart from the *contents* of its works, cannot fail to throw light upon many obscure questions from a philological point of view. For instance, the Mishna language explains to us why Esau used the word הִלְעִיטָנִי instead of the more common הִזְאִכִּילָנִי when asking his brother Jacob for a dish of pottage³. הִלְעִטָּה qualifies the act of eating as a greedy devouring of food, and as such is better suited than הִזְאִכִּילָה in the mouth of a brave and daring huntsman, returning fatigued and hungry from the field of his labours. From the context of Gen. xxvi. 20 one would be inclined to conclude that the verb הִלְעִטָּה, ἀπαξ λεγόμενον, means *to strive, to contend*. The Mishna language, however, informs us that this is not the true signification of the word, but that עָסַק (ס and ש are often interchanged) means *to be engaged*, and hence in the Hithphaël *to be engaged with one another, to dispute*. In a similar manner the Mishna language tells us that the word עָרִיטָה *dough*, which the lexicons cannot account for, has absolutely no connexion with the stem עָרַם, but is the same as עָרְסָה, with inserted ר, and founded on the stem עָרַם *to press, to knead*, which as verb occurs in Mal. iii. 2. How should we explain the phrase הִזְאִכִּילָה עַל גּוֹיִם⁴, according to the meaning which הִזְאִכִּיל has in the Bible, if in later Hebrew we did not find the word הִזְאִכִּיל *lot*, with the result that we get the suitable rendering of this passage, "*which didst cast lots upon the nations*"?

In bringing forward my examples I have naturally selected but a few out of a great number which might

¹ Ibid., p. 10.

² Ibid., p. 14.

³ Gen. xxv. 30. This verb-stem nowhere else occurs in the Bible.

⁴ Isa. xiv. 12.

show how useful the knowledge of later Hebrew is for the study of the Bible. Similar examples may be quoted to prove the utility of later Hebrew also for those languages which have enriched it with their words and ideas. We shall restrict ourselves to those languages most studied in our countries, viz. Latin and Greek. Although the Latin *c* is always represented by ק, we find for the plur. of *circus* along with קירקסאות also סרקי. This difference is well worth noticing. It certainly is not accounted for by the pronunciation of *c* as a sibilant, which, if I am rightly informed, became customary in the sixth century.

With words taken over from the Greek, as Graetz rightly observes, the idioms of the Aeolic and Doric dialects should not be overlooked. These dialects were spread widely over Asia Minor, whence through the medium of Syria they supplied Hebrew with new words. The former shows its influence, e. g. with פּלָטָר = *πωλητής*, פּלָסְטָר = *πλαστός*; the latter with גְּלִיִּסְקָמָא = *γλωσσόκομον*. The omission or insertion of a liquid also is the result of dialect, e. g. קְרָב = *κράβη*, פּוֹרֹבֵיִא = *φορβεία*. The manner in which the aspiration is observed in Hebrew is of no less importance. It is maintained in the middle of compound words, for without exception the people pronounced פְּרִהָרְוֹ, פְּרִהָרְוֹ, בְּנִהָרְוֹ. It is sometimes omitted at the beginning of a word, e. g. *Hispania* is rendered אִיִּסְפָּנְיָא, just as *ὑποθήκη* is rendered אִפּוֹטִיקָא. Occasionally it is found even where it does not occur in Greek, e. g. הָרִיִּט for *ἰδιώτης*. A vowel is now and then prefixed to words which begin with two *mutae* or a *duplex*, e. g. אִסְטְרִטְיָא, אִסְבּוֹלִי, אִסְבּוֹנִי = *ξένος*. From the last-named word we even find a verb in the stem of which the א is retained. Instances are not wanting to show that the Greek pronunciation called *itacism* is not unknown in the Mishna language, e. g. גִּנְיָא = *νύμφη* (after changing *μ* into נ), and פִּירָה, which Jehuda Hanasi, when in Asia Minor, heard people use in the meaning *to acquire*, and which probably is the same as the Ionic *κυρέω* = *τυχάνω*.

It is not impossible that later Hebrew will provide us

with the solution of more than one difficult problem in the classical languages. Possinus, the same scholar who made a Latin translation of the afore-named *Pantschatantra*, but from a Greek version, remarks whilst explaining a passage¹ in which *ἀπόφασις* occurs, that that word cannot there have any other meaning than *condemnation*; and as he knows only one other instance of this in the classical writers, he comforts himself with the thought that with them it signifies at least *a judicial decision*. Yet Nathan ben Jehiel in his lexicon of Talmudic language is able to quote no less than eleven passages from the Midrash where *אִפְסָפָה* (*ἀπόφασις*) has that meaning.

The phrase *arido argento* in Plautus' "*Rudens*"² may certainly be counted amongst those passages which have caused great trouble to many scholars. It is commonly held to mean *a clear, free property, i. e. a property clear of debt*. From verse 23, however, one would feel inclined to understand it as *bare silver, i. e. nothing but silver, silver alone*³. Shall we then regard it as a mere coincidence when hundreds of times in the Talmud we come across the word *אִרְיָא* (lit. *dry*) in the meaning of *alone*, a word which probably by accident strongly resembles the Latin *aridus*?

Although I have excluded the Talmud from amongst the works of later Hebrew, because their dominant language cannot be called Hebrew, they nevertheless constitute a considerable and important division of Jewish literature. The knowledge of later Hebrew cannot fail to lead to the study of the Talmuds; and the student to whom the language of these books is no longer an obstacle, is certain to find in them a large amount of valuable information in connexion with antiquities not only of the Jews but also of the other nations amongst whom they lived, in particular of the Persians from the year 226. The Talmuds contain, moreover, much that can enrich our knowledge in the

¹ Appendix *ad observationes Pachymerianas*, I, 546.

² III, 4, 21.

³ Which seems corroborated by *Asinaria* I, 3, 3, *aurum et argentum merum*.

domain of jurisprudence. To the student of Roman law they will furnish a new and free-flowing fountain at which to quench his thirst for knowledge. If the materials which the Talmuds yield were compared with the Pandects or the Codex Justinianus, in all probability very important results would be obtained. Indeed they have already more than once been made the subject of such a study. Finally, it should be borne in mind that the Talmuds, along with the other works of later Hebrew, have greatly contributed to our knowledge of Jewish histories. How could Dr. Graetz have filled nine portly volumes on the post-biblical history of Israel if he had drawn his information solely from the comparatively small number of non-Hebrew sources ?

These few observations will, I think, suffice to give some idea of the far-reaching advantages which the cultivation of post-biblical literature affords, and to justify me in seeking an opportunity to spread, if possible, the knowledge of its works into wider circles. My sincere thanks are due therefore in the first place to the magistrates of this town, who did not hesitate to favour me with this opportunity, to the curators and professors of this University who lent me their kind support, and finally to all who have honoured my discourse with their presence.

J. D. WIJNKOOP.

[Translated by C. VAN DEN BIESEN.]